Feedback

From the Managing Editor

FROM Los Angeles to New York City, departing SSG John Valceanu provides a coast-tocoast comparison of Army recruiting activity, starting on page 14 in this issue.

This month's cover story, by Steve Harding, takes a look at "Los Al," home of the sole remaining military airfield in the greater Los Angeles basin. And Heike Hasenauer takes readers for a visit to the communications links that hold NATO together in "ACCAP Soldiers."

Former Soldiers intern Sarah McCoy dishes up the inside skinny on America's love affair with "fast foods" and the temptations of "super sizing." Stop in or drive through for your entrée and side dish, starting on page 44.

Finally, we welcome the projected arrival of our new editor in chief. While MAJ John E. Suttle is new to Soldiers, he's no stranger to Army public affairs. He last served in that capacity in the Pentagon in the Office of the Secretary of the Army. Welcome aboard, sir.



An Army of One

I AM not sure the new Army recruiting commercial is sending the intended message.

What the commercial shows is a lone soldier apparently doing his own thing versus being with the group of soldiers going in the other direction. Is this what was intended?

I hope we are not telling young men and women that they can join the Army and "do their own thing" and not be part of the team.

LTC Michael F. Tanigawa (Ret.) Ewa Beach, Hawaii

IN my opinion, the Army's new slogan is not being pitched correctly.

From the time a recruit enters the Army, it is individual personal commitment and conviction that gets the young soldier through the first trying days of Army life. This same personal commitment and conviction also gets the maturing soldier through all of the many trying days of an Army career.

Yes, we as soldiers accomplish everything as a team, but without the personal commitment from each team member the team as a whole will soon find itself ineffective.

It is this same personal commitment that causes you to accomplish the many selfless acts required of all soldiers. I taught NCO development courses in the Army for more than nine years and I can tell you that it doesn't matter how bad the team or class wants a soldier to pass a course. If the individual soldier does not possess the right amount of personal commitment and conviction, that soldier will fail.

You are the only "ONE" who can make these events and, ultimately, all of these lifechanging events a success.

Most Informative

JUST received the new **Soldiers** almanac. Great job as usual. You all deserve a "done good" – most informative one I've seen thus far.

Can't find anything you've forgotten! I find it hard to wait until the February issue when the new active-duty and re-

serve-component pay scales come out.

Again, great job, and thank you for the work you do providing up-to-date information to the soldiers.

Timothy L. Winkler via e-mail

YOUR staff did a fantastic job of creating the collage featuring the Armed Forces Recreation Centers in the January issue. The response has been fantastic, both internally and externally. More importantly, the AFRC collage could not have been placed in a more suitable edition (**The Soldiers Almanac!**) This is by far the most effective promotion on behalf of the AFRCs in a while. It has been a pleasure working with you and I look forward to further collaborations in the future.

Cheryl Mbaye, USACFSC Alexandria, Va.

Without individual personal commitment, and most of all the personal sacrifices from the soldiers' spouses, families and loved ones, the Army as a whole will fail. When each and every "ONE" of us do not possess this personal commitment, we fail our soldiers and ultimately these same soldiers will chose to not stay in the fold. This retention of these fine men and women is what makes the Army strong.

CSM Russ J. Saker Belton, Mo.

Current ads show "An Army of One" in more familiar teamwork settings. Be assured the slogan reflects both the Army's combined might and the soldier's personal strength. Both ideas are part of our heritage. GEN J. Lawton Collins said: "The most precious commodity with which the Army

deals is the individual soldier who is the heart and soul of our combat forces."

Black Berets

MAKING the beret the headgear of the common soldier will make the beret common, no longer the symbol of uncommon skills, abilities, courage, dedication and tough training that the common soldier does not have and could not survive.

You cannot make someone a better soldier by giving them a spiffy new hat to wear. Being a better soldier comes from inside, coaxed by dedicated NCOs and officers at every level who lead by example, and instilled by the toughest, most realistic training imaginable.

Instead of instilling the ranger esprit in the common soldier, this policy will destroy

the esprit of the rangers, and the common soldier will not benefit. Indeed, most of us would be embarrassed by being forced to appear to be pseudo-rangers. Being a common soldier is still something to be proud of, and we wear our own distinctive uniform with pride.

I do agree that a change of headgear is needed, though. I suggest making the Vietnam era "boonie hat" the standard headgear with the BDUs. It is a far more practical hat in that it shields the ears and neck from sun and rain, instead of simply the face.

I urge the chief of staff to rethink this one.

LTC J.G. MacMillan via e-mail

MY husband is both a ranger and special forces, and is a combat veteran of both Grenada and Desert Storm. As he has said, the "beret" itself is nothing but a piece of colored cloth — It doesn't keep the sun out of your eyes or keep your ears warm, is a pain to shape and takes two hands to put on.

Yet, to the airborne and special operations soldiers who wear it, it represents the blood, sweat and tears that every one of them has shed to earn it. By tradition, berets are worn only by elite combat units, and soldiers are ceremonially awarded the hats after completing highly demanding training. All of these soldiers are triple volunteers — volunteers for the Army, volunteers for the airborne school, and volunteers for dangerous assignments and missions.

I believe that allowing every soldier to wear a beret, in particular a black beret, is nothing more than a slap in the face to every special operations soldier. Giving a black beret to the entire Army is telling the mem-

bers of these special units that they are no better than the rest of the military and that their sacrifices and dedication mean nothing.

Headgear does not make excellence, nor does it make an Army superior. Yes, to some, a beret might boost morale, but the bottom line is this: if the goal is to make the "new Army" look dapper in berets, choose an alternate color, something other than black. There are plenty of options out there.

Don't get me wrong. I believe in the Army and all it stands for, and my husband does, too. We believe steps need to be taken to raise morale, but gimmicks like this black beret ordeal are like disavowing that there are individuals out here in

America today who came into the Army to serve because they truly wanted to "Be All That They Can Be."

Caoimhe Byrne-Thayer via e-mail

DO YOU have any history on the issue of the black beret? I would like to ensure that everyone understands the importance of the black beret in Army history. I am not really for this change, because of the training that has had to be endured by those who wear it now.

> SGT Claudio A. Mungaray Los Alamitos, Calif.

THE May issue of Hot Topics, the quarterly insert to Soldiers, is scheduled to cover the black beret.

Soldiers is for soldiers and DA civilians. We invite readers' views. Stay under 150 words — a post card will do — and include your name, rank and address. We'll withhold your name if you desire and may condense your views because of space. We can't publish or answer every one, but we'll use representative views. Write to: Feedback, Soldiers, 9325 Gunston Road, Ste. S108, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060-5581, or e-mail: soldiers@belvoir.army.mil.

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